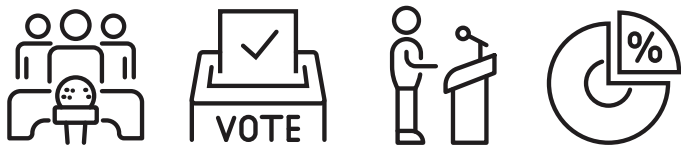


# LOCAL ELECTION ADMINISTRATION **101** KIT

## County Board of Elections (CBOE) Monitoring 2023

This year's elections face unique challenges. We know that expected changes to voting rules and new county board membership could create added barriers for voters. We also know that sufficient election funding is crucial to increasing turnout.

We need to be prepared to support transparent, well-funded, and accessible elections. Democracy NC created this toolkit to equip you with the basics of conducting elections oversight in your community.



### Who Runs Elections in NC?

Multiple institutions fund, support, administer, and set the rules for elections in North Carolina. Here are the players you need to know:

#### Federal Government

- The federal government establishes laws that govern elections via congressional legislation.
- Federal regulations interpret aspects of election law providing contour to the law and how it is implemented.
- The U.S. Supreme Court interprets federal and state laws and can substantially change election law and voting rights.

#### North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA)

The NCGA funds elections and passes laws governing election administration. Examples include the following:

- HB 1169 – Promoted safe and expanded voting access in response to COVID-19 through poll worker flexibility, an online absentee ballot request portal, and more.
- HB 589 – 2013 law requiring voter ID in North Carolina, which was promptly challenged in court by the NAACP

Our goals for Election Advocates in 2023 are:

- Monitoring the actions of your County Board of Elections and election funding by your county commission;
- Attending monthly board meetings;
- Making calls to gather information from county elections staff;
- Developing relationships with county board of elections members and commissioners;
- Advocating for Early Voting plans that create accessible Early Voting sites, hours, and locations to voters;
- Raising our voices in support of good election budgets and voting options.

After receiving our training, you'll be a local elections expert, ready to attend monthly meetings, spot key election issues, build relationships with local officials, and join with others across your county and the state working to win fair elections.

#### North Carolina State Board of Elections

- The NCSBE is the state agency charged with administration of the elections process and campaign finance disclosures and compliance.
- The Executive Director oversees the administrative and legal staff who carry out the decisions of the State Board, provide technical support, and provide legal guidance to 100 county boards of elections.

#### County Commissioners

- Commissioners set the county budget, which includes deciding on the budget for their local county board of elections.
- This means commissioners can decide on the total amount of money available for the county board of elections, including salary and benefits for CBOE personnel.
- Commissioners have the ability to reduce funding to the CBOE at any time during the fiscal year.

## County Boards of Elections (CBOE)

The CBOE structure mirrors the State Board and consists of five members who are registered voters in their county. Each of North Carolina's 100 counties has a Board of Elections that conducts local elections, operates voting sites, maintains voter registration lists, and handles numerous aspects of election administration.

- The State Board of Elections appoints and removes members of the CBOE.
- Each county board includes a director and paid elections staff tasked with carrying out decisions governing election law and policies, and utilizing guidance from the NCSBE and their local CBOE.

## What Do County Boards of Elections Do Each Year?

### Winter / Spring (January - March)

In North Carolina, County Boards of Elections (CBOEs) must regularly update their voter registration lists to maintain accuracy and efficiency in administering elections. In odd years, CBOEs undergo a "big" list maintenance process, officially called "Biennial List Maintenance." During this time, they also prepare budget requests for county commissioners, set calendars and deadlines for the year's elections, and prepare for spring or summer primary elections.

### Spring / Summer (March - June)

County Boards of Elections typically submit their proposed budget to County Commissioners by June 1. Throughout the budget process, there are opportunities to advocate for a better spending

plan that include giving public comment at County Commissioner meetings and meeting with County Commissioners.

### Summer / Fall (July - November)

CBOEs begin to prepare a plan for their county's Early Voting sites. The development of these plans typically begin over the summer and can continue through the fall in odd years. The State Board of Elections establishes the official deadline.

CBOEs prepare for November elections, including poll-worker recruitment, ballot design, and more, and then conduct the elections themselves.

### Fall / Winter (November - December)

During the rest of the year, CBOEs audit vote counts, update voter files, and certify elections winners via canvass processes.

## What is a County Board of Elections Meeting Like?

County Boards of Elections hold regular meetings **monthly**, and often hold **special meetings** near Election Days to review absentee ballots, prepare polling sites, conduct audits and test their systems, and certify the outcomes of the election.

CBOEs **should** post information at a central location (usually their website) about: how to access their meetings, the meeting agenda, and the method to offer public comment. Meeting notices are also posted with the county commissioners and at the CBOE's physical office. Meetings held **outside** the regular schedule require 48 hours' notice. **Emergency** meetings require notice as soon as possible, but state law does not set a specific time. If in doubt, call your Board of Elections! You can find the contact information at [demnc.co/yourboe](http://demnc.co/yourboe).

Board meetings should make time for public comment, where citizens like you can advocate for better Early Voting plans, problems at polling sites, or any other concerns you have.

The Chair usually runs Board meetings with a procedure called "Robert's Rules of Order." Robert's Rules allows the Chair to facilitate meetings so they are orderly and allow every Board member equal time to voice their opinion.

- Members can make "motions" which allow them to hold discussion and take action on a specific issue. Other members then second the motion and, if approved, debate takes place. Members can change motions or "call to question" to end the discussion.
- All Board of Elections in North Carolina run their meetings according to these rules. Don't be intimidated if you hear unfamiliar phrases! You can always ask for clarification via the public comment option at the meeting.

CBOE members deliberate and make decisions on relevant elections issues. Once decisions are approved, the CBOE Director and their staff are responsible for implementation.

## Tips for Building Relationships with Local Officials

## How are Boards of Elections Members Appointed?

To help build relationships, build a habit of communicating with members of your CBOE. When scheduling meetings, keep the meetings small with no more than 4 participants, so the meetings can feel conversational. Meetings are a great way to get to know local officials as a person. Helpful tips include:

1. Prepare and send an agenda in advance of meetings, and avoid lengthy questionnaires;
2. Email local officials and let them know you are there to help;
3. Request information, such as a budget and ask questions about how it meets your communities priorities;
4. Ask how you can help their work on things like budget or election plans
5. Ask how the community can support the year’s elections (e.g. apply to be a poll worker, etc.)

### North Carolina State Board of Elections (NCSBE)

The Governor appoints all 5 board members and the Executive Director. The board must have two members from each major political party, and the Chair is appointed from the Governor’s party.

### County Board of Elections (CBOE)

The state party chair-persons recommend 3 potential appointees to the NCSBE. The state party chair-persons typically make their recommendations by the end of May and the NCSBE votes on recommended CBOE members on June 27th, 2023. The NCSBE then appoints two Republicans and two Democrats to the county board for two-year terms.

The Governor appoints the CBOE Chair. CBOE members take on various duties – more information can be found at the NCSBE website.

If you are interested in becoming a member of your CBOE and have questions about the process, you can reach out to Virginia Reed at [vreed@americavotes.org](mailto:vreed@americavotes.org). Be sure to reach out to Virginia between April and early May so you can be considered for recommendation by your state party chair-person.

## Glossary

**CBOE & BOE** = County Board of Elections (could refer generally to all or to a specific one)

**Cure (Process)** = Uniform method for voters to fix issues with their ballots

**EA** = Election Administration (not laws! EA = local CBOEs & NCSBE activities & policies)

**ED** = Election Day

**EV** = Early Voting

**NCSBE & SBOE** = North Carolina State Board of Elections

**VBM** = Vote by Mail (sometimes called Absentee Vote By Mail or Absentee)

**VR** = Voter Registration

**VRA** = Voting Rights Act (important federal voting rights law)

**HB & SB** = “House Bill” or “Senate Bill” in the North Carolina General Assembly

**NCGA** = North Carolina General Assembly

**Appropriations** = the government process of spending money for public projects or programs

**Witness Signature** = state requirement that a witness sign to ensure the validity of your returned absentee ballot

**Robert’s Rules** = a formal procedure for running various types of meetings

**List Maintenance** = In North Carolina, a routine review process done by CBOEs to ensure accurate information about eligible voters in their voter registration lists



*Document last updated April 2023*

**For more information and additional resources, email us at** [elections@democracync.org](mailto:elections@democracync.org) or go to our website at [demnc.co/electionsadvocacy](http://demnc.co/electionsadvocacy)

**Sign up to be an Election Advocate at** [demnc.co/boemonitor](http://demnc.co/boemonitor)